



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement on Lap Band Advertising

Obesity and the health problems that accompany the condition are urgent public health problems in many of the communities I represent. Predatory business practices pose another threat to the well-being of residents in low-income neighborhoods.

Overly aggressive advertising for lap band surgeries has the potential to combine those two threats, sometimes with deadly consequences.

Although the surgery centers in question are not located in my district, many of the billboards advertising them are, and I suspect therefore that many of the patients come from the areas I represent.

All one has to do is drive through those communities with the car radio on to see and hear the ads urging people to “get thin.” The ads tout easy insurance coverage while seemingly downplaying the difficulty of the choice patients must make when considering the procedure – including health risks.

At the request of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, the Food and Drug Administration has warned several surgery centers about the misleading nature of their advertising.

I hope the advertisers of lap band surgeries will now take this chance to inform the public responsibly.

The federal government has put them on notice, and they are the primary enforcer of medical advertising standards, but the County can also play a role in protecting our residents. Public Health officials and I are discussing actions the County can take to ensure serious health problems are not trivialized as issues of physical attractiveness.

Our options may include stepped up public health advertising and education campaigns promoting health and nutrition, not thinness. We might also address head-on the potential dangers of lap band surgery with our own billboards and ads.

We may also consider outdoor advertising restrictions where possible. Just as the County has worked with the federal government on this issue, we can also collaborate with cities, the state and our representatives in congress to find ways to protect vulnerable consumers from being misled.

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